## Amendments to the Specification:

Paragraph [0033]:

Card status is one type of status information that includes a variety of card-related information, such as a card latch-open status, link operational status, card failure, software ready, and master-slave status. Master-slave status information is another type of status information exchanged between the cards 10, 12, 14. Because the shelf 2 employs redundancy, the Trib cards and SP cards need to know which XC card 12 is the master and which XC card is the slave. Finite state machines implemented on both XC cards 12 negotiate with each other over a link dedicated to this purpose, (i.e., a different link than the protocol links) to determine the master-slave status. The XC cards 12 each sends the negotiated master-slave state (referred herein as XC MS status). Each Trib card 10 determines which XC card 12 is master from the master-slave statuses received from the XC cards. The exchange of other master-slaves statuses also occurs in the shelf 2. The XC cards also transmit a Synchronous Equipment Timing Source or SETS master-slave status to the other cards in the shelf 2, and the Trib cards 10 send master-slave statuses to the XC cards 12.

Paragraph [0042]:

Cross-connect cards 12 continuously exchange frames containing various types of information with each other over xc-xc links 22. Such information includes card status information (similar to those statuses for a Trib card 10 with an additional SETS Master/Slave status) and software messaging.

Trib-to-XC Links and XC-to-Trib Links

Tributary cards 10 and XC cards 12 continuously exchange frames containing various types of information over links 20. Examples of information passing from a Trib card 10 to an XC card 12 over the trib-xc links 20 include a tributary-card status, an STS/VT path status for each STS-1 or VT-1.5 in the received signal (e.g., 192 STS paths for OC-192 signals), a line status for each port of the trib card, a line protection request for each port of the trib card, and software messaging. The tributary-card status and software messaging are the same as that described above in connection with the trib-to-trib links. Also, in one embodiment, nine bits are allocated to carry each STS path status (4 bits for each VT path status), six bits for the line status, and eighteen bits for each set of extended K-bytes, and eight bits for each line protection request. Each Trib card 10 transmits its tributary-card status~~, issues~~ and a software message in every frame (i.e., 125 us), line status and K-byte information in every other frame (i.e., 250 us), and STS path ~~statusand~~ status and VT path status in every frame. Because of the amount of STS path and VT path information to be transmitted, the information is divided over 8 frames for STS path status and divided over 16 frames for the VT path status. Thus, the latencies for transmitting all of the STS and VT path status information are 1ms and 2ms, respectively. Also, in another embodiment, one-half of the K-byte information is transmitted every frame; the latency for transmitting all of the K-byte information is again 250us.